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May the different powers embrace the favourable opportunity of bringing matters to an amicable conclusion, and from what they have learned of the miseries of war, dispense to a suffering world the blessings of peace.

N.S.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

The Investigator.

NO. I.

ON DETRACTION.

THERE is nothing more charming to the popular ear, than calumny or detraction. Such is the present depravity of human nature, that men cannot find subjects upon which sufficiently to exercise their talents without tattering the characters of their fellow-creatures, and such is the general mania for this sort of conversation, that every report obtains implicit belief how infamous and opprobrious soever its author may be. Were Calvin and John Knox only permitted to get a view of the present age, they would undoubtedly conclude that we were a collective mass of believers in predestination. How glorious a scene would they behold! Epidemic faith and universal credulity. But how soon would their sentiments change upon finding that this *creance universelle* did not extend to things of a spiritual nature, and that gospel faith is getting quite *obsolete* in this country. Religion is considered as low and contemptible, only suited to artisans and menials, who being inured to toil all week, are so habituated *à la-charge*, that Sunday would hang quite heavy on their hands, and their hours of rest would roll along, *avec insipidité facheuse*, unless they would read a few chap-

ters in the bible to kill time as they call it. But that people moving in the higher circles of life, who have a variety of time-killing amusements to which they can have recourse, should apply themselves to religion; or confuse their minds by serious contemplation, would neither be polite nor *à-la-mode*. Why then in the name of wonder should people of refined taste, genteel manners, and polite accomplishments, harass their minds by meditating upon subjects so vulgar and pedantic, while they have free access to the characters of others, and can easily create, or cause some adept in the art to fabricate a story which by the venom of their tongues flies like the whirlwind, raising a cloud to destroy that character, which is the object of its fury. As this cloud gradually condenses, balls of conglomeration fire portend some dreadful catastrophe, and threaten immediate vengeance upon the devoted head of that person at whom all these thunderbolts are aimed. Thus may a man's character almost instantaneously be inflamed, and perhaps end in a total conflagration. Whether this fire may have been caused by the great quantity of snow this winter, (for snow produces heat,) or it be *un gage de feu de l'enfers*, given as a guarantee to its possessors, I am rather at a loss to determine; but the latter of these cases appears to possess the greatest verisimilitude; because this thirst for defamation, is not peculiar to the present year; but has existed in several of the preceding years in which there was little or no snow, and consequently it could not originate from that source. It must therefore of necessity be *une étincelle des feux éternels*, sent as the anticipation of that fire which will be so liberally dispensed to slanderers and calumniators here-

after. A great quantity of inflammable matter is possessed by almost every person in the present age, so that it only remains for some person, who has a flint to strike out a spark, and immediately the whole magazine *de la morce* explodes about our ears, and either by its suffocating tendency stops our breath, eclipses our horizon, or to evade the noxious influences of its sulphurous flames, makes us cede our position, and retreat from the enemy, convinced that forgiveness and contempt are the most powerful weapons by which to defeat calumny and detraction. Such alone were the weapons employed by him who through his whole life endured calumny and reproach, and such will ever be employed by his faithful followers.

I.G.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

ON SENSIBILITY.

CONVERSING lately with ladies whom I highly esteem, our conversation for a considerable time consisted of those trifling, uninteresting, chit chat topics, which the tyrant laws of ceremony have prescribed as suitable for ordinary conversation; but which convey no distinct or elevated ideas to the mind, nor produce any beneficial effect on the heart. Our discourse after some time, became more serious and important. Our reflections and train of ideas at length led us to the consideration of an highly interesting question; a question on which I could not then deliver my sentiments accurately, but which has since occupied my most serious attention.

Is the possession of an exquisite and delicate sensibility, a blessing

or a curse? This is a question on which many will disagree; on which various and opposite opinions will be formed. Opinions, correct, absurd, half-formed, according as the temper, state of the passions, force of education, and many other concurring causes, may then operate to influence the judgment.

On reflection, it will be discovered, that this is a question extremely interesting; a question which intimately affects us, and the nature of which we should individually endeavour to comprehend, in order that we may discover the propriety and necessity of cultivating in our hearts an exquisite sensibility. If the possession of it contributes towards promoting or increasing our happiness, by destroying evil propensities, by calming the raging and destructive storms of passion, by purifying our desires and soft affections, and strengthening our virtues, then should it be ardently cherished. If it has a contrary effect; if it renders us more susceptible of pain and misery, if it enervates the intellectual faculties, if it excites discontent and melancholy, and is productive of a pernicious effect on the judgment, then should its approach attentively be checked, and our hearts be steeled against its insinuating influence. But when we seriously reflect on the nature of sensibility, how strong is its influence on the heart, and how strong an effect it must ultimately produce on the manners, the conversation and the understanding; how it purifies the heart from the gross, animal desires which debase and dishonour our nature; how it rectifies the taste, and enlightens and invigorates the intellectual faculties; and how, possessing in its nature something divine, it spreads a heavenly influence over the human character, we must conclude